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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 03/27/07-1

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ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)
March 26, 2007

Questions & Answers

(T = total; P = previous; M = male; F = female)

Q: Do you support the Abe cabinet?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	35	(36)	33	37
No	42	(41)	47	37

Not interested 22 (22) 20 23

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the above question) Why?

	T	P	M	F
Because the prime minister is from the Liberal Democratic Party				
20	(17)	21	18	
Because something can be expected of the prime minister's leadership				
10	(11)	10	10	
Because there's a young, fresh image about the prime minister				
51	(53)	49	53	
Because something can be expected of the prime minister's policy measures				
17	(16)	19	17	

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the above question) Why?

	T	P	M	F
Because the prime minister is from the Liberal Democratic Party				
6	(10)	7	5	
Because nothing can be expected of the prime minister's leadership				
53	(49)	47	60	
Because the prime minister is inexperienced, weak				
19	(21)	20	18	
Because I'm opposed to the prime minister's policies				
21	(19)	25	17	

Q: Which political party do you support?

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	T	P	M	F
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)				
27	(26)	28	26	
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)				
14	(13)	18	10	
New Komeito (NK)		5	(4)	3
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)				7
3	(2)	2	3	
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)				
2	(2)	1	3	
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)				
0	(--)	0	--	
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)				
0	(1)	--	0	
Other political parties				
2	(1)	1	2	
None				
47	(49)	46	47	

Q: The LDP has reinstated former House of Representatives member Seiichi Eto, who voted against postal privatization and left the LDP. In addition, the LDP has decided to officially recognize him as its candidate for this summer's election for the House of Councillors. Do you support this?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	12		13	12
No	82		83	80

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes") Why?

	T	P	M	F
The LDP should have not ousted him				
34		30	38	
It has been over one year since he voted against postal privatization				
34		39	30	
Because his ideas are close to Prime Minister Abe's				
26		23	28	

Q: (Only for those who answered "no") Why?

T	P	M	F
It's strange to give special treatment to a person who is close to Prime Minister Abe			
15	12	17	
It's contradictory to the decision to oust him			
75	80	71	
It will have a bad influence on the election			
8	7	9	

Q: Agriculture Minister Toshiharu Matsuoka has earmarked about 5 million yen for his Diet office's utilities in his report of political funds. What do you think about this?

T	P	M	F
He should resign as agriculture minister			
48	49	47	
There's no need for him to resign as agriculture minister, but he should fulfill his accountability			
46	45	46	
There's no problem because he is not required under the law to do so			

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3	4	3
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(Note) Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. "0" indicates that the figure was below 0.5%. "--" denotes that no respondents answered. "No answer" omitted. Figures in parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted Feb. 24-25.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted March 24-25 over the telephone with the aim of calling a total of 1,000 voters across the nation on a computer-aided random digit sampling (RDS) basis. Answers were obtained from 1,073 persons.

(2) Poll on Abe cabinet, its job performance over past 6 months, political parties

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
March 24, 2007

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of a survey conducted in February. Some portions already reported.)

Q: Do you support the Abe cabinet?

Yes	43.8
No	43.9
Other answers (O/A)	4.4
No answer (N/A)	7.9

Q: Which political party do you support now? Pick only one.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	36.4
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	11.3
New Komeito (NK)	2.1
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	1.8
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	0.7
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0.1
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0.1
Other political parties	---
None	46.0
N/A	1.5

Q: (Only for those who answered "none" to the above question) Pick as many reasons as you like from among those listed below, if any.

They won't carry out their pledges	14.8
They're only thinking of their interests	26.5
They're always struggling in their parties	16.5
They won't resolve problems close to us	17.3
None of them is trustworthy	26.6
Politics is unlikely to change whichever political party I may	

support	47.8
Uninterested in politics	14.1
O/A	1.5
N/A	2.5

Q: (Only for those who answered "none" to the above question) If you had a political party to support in the past one year or so, pick the most recent one from among those listed below.

LDP	10.5
DPJ	11.5

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NK	0.5
JCP	1.1
SDP	1.4
PNP	---
NPN	---
Other political parties	---
None	69.6
N/A	5.4

Q: What's your impression of Prime Minister Abe from the following five aspects?

Action

He's steadily done what he said	19.5
He's failed to come up with actual results unlike his policy slogan	71.9
N/A	8.7

Leadership

He's been displaying leadership	16.1
He's failed to display leadership	77.5
N/A	6.3

Opinion, belief

He's translated his opinion and belief into action	48.7
He's failed to translate his opinion and belief into action	41.8
N/A	9.5

Reform posture

Positive about reform	42.3
Negative about reform	47.5
N/A	10.2

Friendliness

Feel friendly	59.6
Don't feel friendly	34.9
N/A	5.5

Q: Do you have expectations for Prime Minister Abe?

Yes	27.6
Yes to a certain degree	26.2
No to a certain degree	20.0
No	24.8
N/A	1.4

Q: Prime Minister Abe has been in office for nearly six months. Do you appreciate his or his cabinet's performance over the past six months?

Appreciate very much	4.5
Appreciate somewhat	31.8
Don't appreciate very much	40.3
Don't appreciate at all	19.8
N/A	3.6

Q: If there is anything you can appreciate in what Prime Minister Abe or his cabinet has actually done, pick as many as you like from among those listed below.

US ties	7.9
China ties	17.5
South Korea ties	8.6
Efforts for North Korea issues	27.9
Defense Agency upgrade to ministry	11.0
Efforts for educational reform	18.2
Efforts for social divide correction	3.2
Efforts for constitutional revision	4.9
Postal rebels' reinstatement in LDP	3.4
Response to cabinet ministers' scandals and gaffes	3.3
Response to political funds, including office spending	3.1
O/A	0.1
Nothing in particular	38.5
N/A	3.5

Q: If there is anything you cannot appreciate in what Prime Minister Abe or his cabinet has actually done, pick as many as you like from among those listed below.

US ties	9.4
China ties	10.8
South Korea ties	7.9
Efforts for North Korea issues	22.7
Defense Agency upgrade to ministry	8.6
Efforts for educational reform	12.4
Efforts for social divide correction	22.8
Efforts for constitutional revision	9.1
Postal rebels' reinstatement in LDP	31.6
Response to cabinet ministers' scandals and gaffes	53.9
Response to political funds, including office spending	37.9
O/A	0.5
Nothing in particular	13.3
N/A	3.7

Q: Who do you think is most influential now in government administration? Pick only one from among those listed below.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe	21.3
Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki	1.5
Foreign Minister Taro Aso	7.1
LDP Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa	10.1
LDP House of Councillors Chairman Mikio Aoki	4.4
Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi	17.1
Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori	7.6
New Komeito President Akihiro Ota	0.8
Others	0.5
None + N/A	29.6

Q: What's your impression of the Abe cabinet? (A) It's pulling together to work on policy tasks. (B) It's failed to work together. Which one is close to yours?

(A)	3.8
(A) to a certain degree	9.6
(B) to a certain degree	28.4
(B)	54.2
N/A	4.0

Q: Do you think the LDP's nature and political approach have changed for the better with Prime Minister Abe coming into office after Prime Minister Koizumi?

Changed for the better	2.0
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Changed for the better to a certain degree	6.2
Remain unchanged	48.1
Changed for the worse to a certain degree	22.7
Changed for the worse	18.1
N/A	2.9

Q: How long would you like the Abe cabinet to stay on? Pick only one

from among those listed below.

March 2007

Step down as early as possible	16.1
About six more years	7.8
About 1 more year	22.1
2 or 3 more years	28.3
As long as possible	18.0
O/A	0.2
N/A	7.6

November 2006

Step down as early as possible	5.1
About six more years	2.6
About 1 more year	11.2
2 or 3 more years	34.8
As long as possible	36.1
O/A	0.5
N/A	9.7

Polling methodology

Date of survey: March 17-18.

Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random-sampling basis).

Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.

Number of valid respondents: 1,741 persons (58.0%)

Breakdown of respondents: Male-49%, female-51% ; persons in their 20s-11%, 30s-16%, 40s-16%, 50s-20%, 60s-21%, 70 and over-16% ; big cities (Tokyo's 23 wards and government-designated cities)-22%, major cities (with a population of more than 300,000)-18%, medium-size cities (with a population of more than 100,000)-25%, small cities (with a population of less than 100,000)-23%, towns and villages-12%.

(3) Six months pass since Abe cabinet inaugurated; Prime Minister Abe shifting policy stance toward the right

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 27, 2007

The cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe celebrated yesterday its six-month anniversary in office. During the past six months, Abe has been criticized for not displaying leadership. Public approval ratings for the Abe cabinet have continued to decline. However, Abe has shown a slight change in his political stance. He appears to have begun showing his own political identity.

Koizumi Style

Abe instructed to Administrative Reform Minister Yoshimi Watanabe in an informal cabinet meeting on March 22 to come up with a plan to reform the civil servant system until the 27th.

Asked by reporters about his instruction to Watanabe, Abe responded:

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"I ordered him to follow my instruction and draft a detailed plan." He said five times that he had so instructed. He has recently often insisted on his own opinions. His top-down leadership is similar to that of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who pushed through his postal privatization plan.

When assuming office, Abe underscored that he would place emphasis on teamwork, saying, "I want to implement policy measures with the participation of many people." He picked those who have similar visions and policies to him to serve in the Prime Minister's Official Residence and let them handle policy issues, without giving specific instructions.

The assessment that he lacks leadership has spread among the people, and the Abe cabinet has suffered from poor popular support. Therefore, the prime minister has begun to change his policy stance.

Some has reacted coolly toward a change in Abe's stance, saying, "It's just his performance of trying to impress his leadership. He will be tested as to whether he can show a clear direction of reform of the public servant system.

Conservative color

Abe's assuming leadership means that he will bring his political identity to the fore.

For example, soon after taking office, Abe took a position of following the apology statement for the wartime comfort women issued by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono.

Of course, he has still upheld his basic position, but there is a delicate change in his recent remarks.

When the US House of Representatives began to discuss seriously a resolution criticizing Japan for the wartime comfort women issue, Abe met with a group of LDP lawmakers calling for a review of and reinvestigation into the Kono statement and pledged to cooperate with the party's reinvestigation into the Kono statement. All the more because it is well known that Abe is critical of the apology statement, some say that he has finally revealed his real view.

Such a change in his stance seems to have taken favorably by conservative supporters of the LDP. There is an analysis that because of this reason Abe's cabinet support rates in the polls have unchanged recently.

It is unknown how unaffiliated voters, who will determine the outcomes of the unified local elections and the July Upper House race, will take such a change in Abe's stance. The fate of the Abe administration, which has begun to shift its policy toward the right, remains uncertain.

(4) Start of debate on re-reorganization of central government offices

YOMIURI (Page 11) (Full)
March 23, 2007

The Committee on Reform of the Central Government Offices, headed by Hiroyuki Sonoda, of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Administrative Reform Promotion Headquarters heard views of Kiyoshi Mizuno, who

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served as secretary general of the former Administrative Reform Council in the Hashimoto cabinet, reorganized the ministries and agencies. With this, the LDP has begun a full-scale debate on re-reorganization of the central government offices. Six years have passed since the Hashimoto government reorganized the ministries and agencies into one cabinet office and 12 ministries and agencies in January 2001. Social conditions, including globalization and a declining birthrate and graying society, have changed greatly. Chances are that procedures for giving body to the re-reorganization of the central government offices will be pushed forward.

Chairman Sonoda stressed in a meeting of March 22: "We must discuss the issue in the concept of transferring jobs 'from the state to the prefectures' and 'from the public sector to the private sector,' not just reducing the number of ministries and agencies." Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged in his policy speech in January that he would substantially review the basic framework of the administrative, education, and economic systems based on the Constitution. Therefore, the Abe administration appears to have been motivated to play up its stance of placing priority on reform.

Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Yoshihide Suga in January proposed setting up an information and telecommunications ministry, creating a stir. This idea came up in the process of administrative reform by the Hashimoto government in 1997, but it was shelved in the face of strong resistance by LDP lawmakers connected to postal interests. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIAC) is now in charge of regulations on and promotion of communications and broadcasting. The Ministry of

Economy and Industry (METI), the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), and Information Technology Headquarters of the Cabinet Secretariat, are involved in the promotion of communications and broadcasting.

In the LDP's session on March 22, Mizuno proposed that regulatory administration of broadcasting and telecommunications should be an independent committee, and that the promotion sector straddling the MIAC, METI, and ACA should be merged into an information, communication and broadcasting agency. METI is alarmed about the MIAC-led idea of establishing an information and communications ministry.

Amid the dropping birthrate and an aging population, Japan's tax and social security systems will likely become issues. The idea of creating a revenue agency, which would collect both taxes and social insurance premiums, will likely become an issue.

The largest opposition party, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) proposed streamlining the National Tax Agency as part of effort to reform of the NTA, and creating a Revenue Agency, which would also collect pension premiums.

However since of about 22 million persons who should pay the national pension, only 15% have paid the national taxes, some view that whether collecting taxes and pension premiums by one agency will be effective is uncertain.

(5) Revision of Kono Statement

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 18, 2007

An argument calling for revising the then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono's statement offering an apology and self-reflection to

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wartime comfort women is gaining momentum. The focus is on whether the former Japanese Army forced those women into such servitude. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is following in the footsteps of the statement, claimed, "There is no evidence of coercion in the narrow sense of the term, that is to say, there is no evidence that the authorities forced those women to serve as comfort women." The Tokyo Shimbun asked lawmakers of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) about the issue.

Yasuhide Nakayama, Lower House member of the LDP: Urges accurate grasp of the matter through reinvestigation

-- Do you think that the Kono Statement should be revised?

"That is the basic thought of many members of the Group of Lawmakers who Think about the Future of Japan and History Education. The Kono Statement starts with words 'regarding the so-called wartime comfort women.' As an unimpeachable historical fact, there were comfort women, but there were no military comfort women. Under the then state-regulated prostitution system, the authorities recruited comfort women in the form of consignment to service providers and established wartime brothels. Some lawmakers are skeptical about the way hearings were conducted toward former comfort women, the basis for the Kono Statement. We would be able to release highly accurate results, if a reinvestigation is conducted."

-- Prime Minister Abe has repeatedly said that he would follow in the footsteps of the Kono Statement. He also expressed an apology to former comfort women.

"Women who worked as comfort women were in poor surroundings. I imagine Prime Minister Abe shares the same thought with other prime ministers in the past, who sent letters of apology. This is clearly demonstrated in his stance of following in the footsteps of the Kono Statement. However, in my view, the Kono Statement should be revised, because new facts have been discovered since then."

-- The US House of Representative is deliberating on a resolution seeking an apology from Japan on this matter.

"We have established a subcommittee under the Dietmen's League and started discussions on the issue with the move of the US Congress as the occasion. Japan and the US have a friendly relationship, but the US is seeking an apology from the Japanese government, based on a unilateral perception that is not based on objective historical facts. It is only natural for us to express our concern."

-- Isn't there concern about the matter developing into a diplomatic issue?

"The people have criticized the Japanese government's hitherto diplomacy as being kowtow (to the US). If there are historical evidence or facts substantiating that Japan did not carry out sordid things, we must make efforts to correctly grasp what happened and stake out its position."

-- Which should conduct a reinvestigation - the LDP or the government?

"It would be fine for the LDP to carry out that work, if the prime minister wishes so. However, in that case, there is the possibility that even if a highly accurate and balanced result is obtained, some may say that the result is biased toward the LDP. In my view,

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reinvestigation by the government will become necessary sooner or later from a just and fair perspective."

Yasuhide Nakayama: Graduated from the Seijo University Law Department. First elected in the 2003 Lower House election, after working at Dentsu Inc. Serving as chairman of the Group of Lawmakers who Think about the Future of Japan and History Education consisting of voluntary LDP members. Elected twice. 36 years old.

(Interviewer Hitoshi Tojo)

Upper House member Toshio Ogawa of JDP: Coercion in narrow sense of the term is pointless argument

-- Do you think it is necessary to review the Kono Statement?

"The involvement of the former Japanese Army became clear through appropriate investigation conducted by the government. The government offered an apology, based on the result of the investigation. Why then is it necessary for it to revise it? It is logical for it to thoroughly reflect on Japan's conduct in the past. It is strange for it to say that there were no facts on which it should reflect."

-- Some disagree with the very fact that there was coercion.

"Service providers played a key role in recruiting comfort women, but the military had a direct part in the action. Since it was highly likely that it was impossible to defy the military, it is unavoidable to decide that there was coercion."

-- The prime minister has recognized coercion in the broad sense of the term, including application by those women for recruitments against their will due to their financial standing, but he is negative toward coercion in the narrow sense of the term.

"Whether it is a narrow sense of the term or a broad sense of the term does not matter. The Kono Statement does not mention that the authorities were involved in the forcible taking of those women. My impression is that the prime minister wants to reject the Kono Statement, but since it is impossible for him to do so because of his position, he made up the term 'in a narrow sense of the term'. However, that is a pointless argument. It would not be accepted."

-- Why do you think the prime minister wants to reject the Kono Statement?

"He presumably wants to make a public appeal that he is maintaining his own reactionary stance."

-- How do you evaluate the resolution submitted to the US House of

Representatives?

"Since it is the matter concerning the trustworthiness of our country, it will be troublesome if it is accepted. However, behind the submission of such a resolution is criticism from the international community that Japan is not implementing the Kono Statement to the letter. Since Japan is in a position where it must offer an apology, the international community would not agree, if it insists that the testimony given by comfort women is groundless."

-- Some DPJ members are positive toward revising the Statement. What is your view on that?

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"The more they make a fuss over the issue, the more likely Japan will be judged as not really reflecting on the matter. The party's basic stance is that the government should deal with the issue, based on the Kono Statement."

-- Will this issue serve as a useful material in pursuing the Abe administration?

"As also in the case of the constitutional issue or the Yasukuni visit issue, the prime minister's essential characteristic that he is a hawk and ethnic nationalist is reflected in the wartime comfort women issue. I want to bring into bold the potential danger that the Abe administration is reactionary."

(Interviewer Shoichi Takayama)

Toshio Ogawa: Graduated from the Rikkyo University Law Department. Elected for the first time in the 1998 Upper House election, for which he ran from the Tokyo constituency, after serving as a judge at the Shizuoka District Court and a public prosecutor at the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office. Currently secretary general of DPJ members in the Upper House. Attorney. Elected twice. 59 years old.

SCHIEFFER